

A Copper-plate Inscription of Khandesh.

(Read on 30th March 1916.)

About the end of November last, Mr. P. B. Gothaskar, the Assistant Secretary and Librarian of the B. B. R. A. Society, sent me, for decipherment, a copper-plate grant. The Persian inscription on this plate forms the subject of my paper. In his subsequent letter, dated 19th January 1916, in reply to my inquiries about the place where the copper-plate was found, I was told that it belonged to Mr. Plunket, Assistant Postal Censor, Bombay, who had the plate "from a Bhil somewhere near the border of the Nizam's Dominions near the Ellora caves," and that "he secured it as of antiquarian interest."

I beg to thank Maulawi Sayyid Amiru-d-din of Naosari for helping me in deciphering some words here and there. I also beg to thank Mr. G. Yazdani for suggesting the reading of some doubtful words, and for placing at my disposal in that connection a Persian manuscript said to be compiled by *Shāh Nawāz Khān* (1699-1757), the author of the *Ma'āthiru-l Umārā'* (*Elliot*, Vol. VII, pp. 189-191). This manuscript, as stated by Mr. Yazdani, is "a sort of statistical account of the political divisions of the empire at that period (early eighteenth century), written very much on the lines of the Gazetteers of modern days."

Text.

سند از حضور پیر پولاد لامع^۱ انوار صوبہ خاندیس سرکار ملہیر
 خجستہ بنیاد پر گنہ تو (?) کالہ موضع اکار از
 حضور مذکور پیر پولاد بسبب رشادت و
 دلوری سبب آبادی کردن بر ویراچوت پتیل ولد راوجی
 پتیل قوم مہراتی^۲ ازک موزی و ہولو نایک ولد اچوت نایک
 بہیل ازک^۳ بترتری را موضع اکار انعام دادہ شد زمین زراعت
 شصت بیگہ رود جنوب اسم از جائی کالی (?) و نیز حق معینی
 کہ از اراضی لایق ہفت بوجہ و یا سر وغیرہ غلہ از زمین پیدا شود

نقشہ پیر پولاد

^۱ For لامع الانوار lit. bright with lights, luminous, brilliant, exalted.

^۲ *Arak* is a Dekhani Hindi word meaning a 'surname' (*Shakespeare's Hindustani-English Dictionary*, p. 91). It corresponds to Gujarati *atak*.

^۳ Perhaps the Bhilala tribe of the Bhils. *Khandeish Gazetteer*, p. 83.

سند از حضرت میر یو لا و لا مع الو

صاحب خانده یس کار با شش بنیاد بر کز تو کالار
موضا کار از حضرت مده کور میر یو لا و لا بنیاد

و ولا در یک سبب آبادی کرده بر سر و احوت
بشیر و له را او چیل تووم مرقی از کس

و سولونایک و له احوت بایک ایل از کس
شیر را سوزا کار انعام داده شده زمینی از کس

حمت سیکه رود و جنوب اسم از جایی کله
و بز حق معینی که از اران ساجی لایق هفت برج

و یار و غمیره غلامان زمین پیدا شود و موافق قرین
بدید و او شها و بی از غلامه موافق قرین بدید و او شها

جد کس از راه اندر رفت از حکم سر کار بنیاد ایل
سند از حضرت میر یو لا و لا مع الو

درین باب تاکید اکید و تقدیر متن را شش بیع نوع از کس
رکع و شیعیان حکم نور زنده سلسله نویی بتاریخ

دو از دهم به امان شهبان در رتبه بنیاد

موافق قرینہ بدہد واوٹھاوئی از غلہ موافق قرینہ بدہد و ہوشیاری
 چوکھی از راہ آمد و رفت از حکم سرکار ہشیار باشد سند از
 حضور جمیع اہل کار و راجوشنہ (?) حاضر باش درین باب تاکید
 اکید و قدغن دانستہ بہیچ نوع الی آن زمین آیین^۱ عدول حکمی
 نورزند سنہ ۱۰۱۷ ہجری بتاریخ دوازدم ۱۲ ماہ شعبان روز
 پنجشنبہ —

Translation.

A Grant (*sanad*) from the Court (or dignified presence *huzūr*) of Pīr Paulād, the brilliant in splendour (lit. brilliant in rays) in the province (*sūbāh*) of Khandesh, in the district (*sarkār*) of Mulher, of auspicious foundation, in the sub-district (*parganah*) of . . . Kalna in the village (*mausa*) of Ākār. The village of Ākār has been given as a gift by the court of the above Pīr Paulād for bravery and firmness in cultivating and making habitable (waste lands) to Veru Achut Patel, son of Rāoji Patel of the community of Marathi, of the tribe of Morē and to Haulu Nāik, son of Āchut Nāik² Bhil of the tribe of Baṛī.

Land of cultivation, 60 (bighas) ³ (near) the southern stream (namely) in the zone of black (soil) and also the settled Haqq⁴ (lit. privilege or right), viz., from cultivable lands seven *bojh*⁵ or head loads of the grain produced in the land, may be given according to proportion (i.e. proportionately), and the rate for the removal (*uthāvnī*⁶ lit.

¹ عدول حکمی 'udul-hukmī, disobedience.

² Nāik has been wrongly written *ḍāik*, the *nukta* or dot being marked below instead of above.

³ A *Bigha* in the Mughal times was "a quantity of land 60 *gaz* long by 60 broad. Should there be any diminution in length or breadth or excess in either, it is brought into square measure and made to consist of 3,600 square *gaz* . . . 3,600 square *gaz* = 2,600 sq. yards = 0.538 or somewhat more than half an acre" (*Āin-i-Akbari* by Jarret, Vol. II, p. 62, and n.)

⁴ *Haqq* حق . We learn from Captain Graham's article on the Bhils (*Historical Sketch of the Bheel Tribes inhabiting the Province of Khandesh in The Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, No. XXVI, New Series (1856), p. 219. (Separate print, p. 11), that the word 'Huk' or 'Huck' was a technical term as used among the Bhils. The Bhil Naiks had regular 'Huks', i.e., rights or privileges, whereby they received every year something in kind from every village of the district. When the British Government began to use a conciliatory policy to subdue and improve these hill tribes a "regular payment of a certain sum of money" was at length introduced "in lieu of their 'Huks', which had been heretofore received in kind from every village of the district."

⁵ Hind. *bojh* بوجہ, "load, weight; (in agricultural language) about 5 *dhokas* of corn" (John Shakespear's *Hindustani English Dictionary*.)

⁶ From *Uthānā*, a Hindustani word of Sanskrit origin.

lifting up) of the grain may be given in proportion.¹ And in carefulness for (watching) the custom-post (*chauki*) on the road of ingress and egress, they may remain watchful for the orders of Government. The *sanad* may be presented² (*i.e.*, shown) to all the people of business and royalty.³

Recognising the urgent⁴ order and injunction⁵ they should not exercise any disobedience of the order in any way or in any manner so long as (this *sanad* is held by the donees). Year 1017 Hijri on the twelfth (12th) day of the month, *Shā'bān*, Thursday.⁶

To understand properly the divisions of the country mentioned in the grant, one must understand the divisions as known in the Mughal times. The *Āin-i-Akbari* helps us a little in this direction. It says:

“Each *Subah* is divided into a certain number of *sarkārs* and each

¹ *Qarīnah*, conjecture, similarity, symmetry, correspondence, regularity, order.

² Or it may mean, “the *sanad* may be taken as presented by all people.”

³ *Rājvashna* may be a mistake for *rājvansi* راج ونسی a Hindi word of Sanskrit origin, meaning ‘of royal descent’. It is also the name of a Rajput tribe.

⁴ *Akyad*, most urgent.

⁵ The word, as it is written, can be read otherwise, but it seems to be miswritten for قدغن (*qad ghan*), *i.e.*, injunction order.

⁶ “The latter portion of the *sanad* beginning from زمین زراعت may also be translated thus :—

[(The entire produce of) the sixty *bighas* of the cultivated land watered by the Southern stream, namely, from the place whence the black (cotton soil area begins); and also the fixed revenue on (other) cultivable lands, *i.e.*, seven *bojh* or head loads, etc., of the grain produced in the land, according to approximate calculation, should be paid (by Virū Achut Patel and Hanlū Nāik to Pir Paulād's government.) The tax on the removal of the corn should also be paid in proportion to the gross quantity. They (Virū and Hanlū) should also be mindful of the orders of Government (Pir Paulād) in exercising a careful watch on the ingress and egress (of the village). The *sanad* (is issued) from the presence (of Pir Paulād) to all officials and tax-collectors (?) at present holding office, who should follow the injunctions and directions contained in the orders, and should not disobey them in any circumstances or in any manner so long as (the *sanad* is held by the donees). 1017 A.H., on the 12th *Shā'bān*, Thursday.

The verbs باشد and بد in lines 9 and 10 of the Persian text should have been in the plural form—باشند and بدند. The dot of their ن seems to have been omitted through the carelessness of the engraver.

The donor, while bestowing the village on Virū and Hanlū for their services in colonizing the waste lands, has reserved certain items of revenue for his government, namely, the entire produce of the sixty *bighas* of the black cotton soil, a fixed rate on other cultivable lands, and the Uthāviani tax. Further, he has bound the donees with the duty of keeping watch on the ingress and egress of the village in return for the gift made to them. Such conditions still prevail with regard to the colonization of the desolate areas technically called

زمین بی چراغ; in the Deccan.—Mr. G. Yazdani.]

sarkār into *parganāhs* or *mahals* (used as equivalent expressions).¹ In Akbar's time "His Majesty apportioned the Empire into twelve divisions, to each of which he gave the name of *Subah* When Berār, Khāndesh and Ahmadnagar were conquered, their number was fixed at fifteen."

Now let us examine the names of the places mentioned in the copper plate. The place, to which the grant belongs, is the village of Akār in Khandesh. There is no doubt about the reading of the name 'Khāndesh' as given in the plate. Khandesh formed one of the several *subāhs* in the Mughal times. "It was one of the countries that was lately constituted a *subah* by Akbar. According to the *Āin-i-Akbari*, Khandesh was named Dandesh by Akbar after its conquest. It says "Dānyāl (a son of Akbar) was appointed governor of the newly conquered territory, which was called by Akbar Dāndesh (a combination of the words Dānyāl and Khandesh)." (Blochmann's *Translation*, Vol. I, p. 336 and n. Nawab Saṁṣamu-d-Daulāh's MS. says the same thing.)

بتوجه عرش آشیانی چون قلعہ آسیر مفتوح گشت این ملک
 بشاہزادہ دانیاں مفوضی گردید از آن رو بہ داندیش شہرت
 یافت

The village of Akār, to which the grant of land refers, is described as belonging to the *subāh* of Khandesh and to the *sarkār* of Mulhir. Akār is spoken of as a fort.

A *subāh* or province in Mughal times was divided, as said above, into several *sarkārs* or districts. The *sarkār* of the grant is Mulhir. It is variously written as Moolir, Molir, or Mālir (*Elloit* III, 256, VII, 66, 309, 311, 312, 472). "It lies about half way a little west of a line drawn from Chāndor to Nandurbar (*Ibid.*, VII, p. 66, n.1). Mulhir and Sālhir are said to be the strongest of the forts of Baglāna (*Ibid.*, 66). The Hyderabad MS. also speaks of it as a *qasbāh*.

The two words after the name of the *sarkār* seem to be *Khujastā bunyād*, i. e., "Auspicious foundation." We come across some words of praise or good auspices in connection with places in other writings also. For example "*Bandar-i-mubārak-i-Surat*", i. e., "the auspicious port of Surat." Aurangbād is spoken of as *Khujastā bunyād* (*Elliot* VII, 194, 256, 305).

¹ *Āin-i-Akbari*, translated by Jarret. Vol. II, p. 114 n. and p. 115.

The *sarkārs*, which are sub-divisions of a *subāh*, were in Mughal times divided into *parganāhs* or provinces. The province of Kālāna is spoken of in the State MS. as being in the possession of Niẓāmu-l-Mulk. In one place, it is spoken of as *maḥall*, and in another, as *sarkār* (*Elliot* VI, p. 102). It was taken by Abul Fazl in the 46th year of Akbar's reign. Its governors are spoken of as *qal'adars* (*Ma'asiru-l-Umarā* of Nawab Samsamu-d-Daulah, Shāh Nawāz Khān, edited by Maulavi Mirza Ashraf Ali (1891, Vol. III, p. 117, l. 18 ; p. 420, ll. 5-6). The word before this name may possibly be '*rud*', i.e., river, because in the State MS. we read of *Āb-i-Kālāna*.

The name of the person granting the land is Pir Paulad. This word

The Grantor. occurs thrice in the plate. The first time on the right-hand top-corner, where it is written پیر پولاد

without the three *nuktāhs* or dots under the second *pe* ; the second time in the first line, where it is properly written with the *nuktāhs* as

پیر پولاد ; the third time in the third line, where it

occurs without the *nuktāhs* as in the right-hand top-corner. The name is that of a Muhammadan. We learn from *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī* that Paulād¹ was a Muhammadan name. We do not know who he was. We know of one Pir connected with Khāndesh. He was Pir Muhammad Khān of Shirwān, referred to in the *Āin-i-Akbarī* (No. 20) in the list of the Grandees of the Mughal Empire. "Pir Muhammad was a Mullā, and attached himself to Bairām in Qandahār. Through Bairām's influence he was raised to the dignity of Amir on Akbar's accession Whilst in Gujarāt, Pir Muhammad heard of Bairām's disgrace, and returned at once to Akbar who made him a Khān. In 968, he was appointed with Adham Khān to conquer Mālwah In 969, he defeated Bāz Bahādur. He then made a raid into Khāndes, which was governed by Mirān Muhammad Shāh, (and) sacked the capital Burhānpūr."² He perished while crossing the Narbadah at night when defeated by Bāz Bahādur. Possibly the Pir Paulād of our plate was a descendant of this Pir. Or, perhaps, this Pir Paulad may be a descendant of the Pir Roshanais of King Akbar's time. The *Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī*,³ thus speaks of this Pir : "In former times,⁴ a Hindustani soldier had come among

¹ *Pulad Turk bacha*, *Elliot*, Vol. IV, pp. 68-79.

² Blochmann's *Translation*, Vol. I, p. 324. See also the *Ma'asiru-l-Umarā*, Vol. I, pp. 69, 71, 390, 615, Vol. II, p. 765.

³ *Elliot*, Vol. V, pp. 450-51.

⁴ "Twenty-five years before this (994 Hijrī)," i.e., in 969. *Badaoni*, translated by Lowe, Vol. II, p. 360.

the Afghans and set up a, heretical sect.¹ He induced many foolish people to become his disciples and he gave himself the title of Pir Roshanāi. He was dead, but his son Jalāla, a youth of about fourteen, came in the year 989 H. to wait upon the Emperor as he was returning from Kabul. He was kindly received; but after a few days his evil disposition induced him to take flight, and go off to the Afghans. There he raised disturbances, and gathering a good number of men around him, he shut up the roads between Hindustan and Kabul. In order to repress this base sect of Roshanais, whose baseness will be hereafter described, His Majesty placed Kunwar Man Singh in command and gave him Kābul in Jagir." Later on, we read that "Saiyid Hamid Bukhāri, formerly one of the nobles of the Sultans of Gujarat was sent to Peshawar for the repression of the Roshanai sectaries. They had assembled about 20,000 foot and 5,000 horse to attack him. He and a few men who were with him at the time fought and perished. The Emperor sent Zain Khan Koka and with a large force to subdue these heretics, who occupied the Khaibar Pass, and closed the road between Kabul and Hindustan. Kunwar Man Singh marched from Kabul and attacked and defeated them in the Khaibar and put a great many of them to the sword. He then occupied Jamrud and left a detachment in the Khaibar. The adjective applied to Pīr Paulād, *Lāmi ānwar*, i.e., brilliant in rays," suggests that possibly he was either one of the descendants or one of the sect of Pīr Roshnāi, because the word, *Rosh-nā'i* also means 'luminous'. That this Pīr Paulād was a man of some consequence, appears from the use of the word '*Huzur*' before his name.

In the grant where the names of the holders of the lands are mentioned, we find the terms Bhil, Mori, Nāik and Patel. We will now see what are the significations of these words. The words Patel and Nāik are referred to in Captain Graham's Paper entitled

"*Historical Sketch of the Bhil Tribes inhabiting the Province of Khāndesh.*"² Patels were the heads of villages. The Nāiks were the chiefs of the village Bhils. Formerly, "the chief Nāiks of the Purguna, on the occurrence of a vacancy, had the right of appointing the Jagla (watchman); but from long possession, the

¹ *Mashāb-i-ilahād wa zandagā* (Capt. Lees and Munshi Ahmed Ali's Text of the *Mubtakhāb-al-Tawārikh* (1865) Vol. II., p. 349 l. 6.

² *Elliot V.*, p. 445.

³ See "*Selections from the records of the Bombay Government*," No. XXVI, New Series pp. 201, et seq.

village occupation in time became hereditary, and the watchmen, as members of the community, were bound alone to obey the Patel, the head of the village."¹

In the History of Khândesh we find mention of several Bhil Nâiks.² The word *Nâyak* seems to have been a titular word in the Mughal times. We read of the 'Nâyak of Mysore' in some of the papers of the English Factories.³

The *Khândesh Gazetteer* says: "Khândesh Bhils may conveniently be arranged under three groups: plain Bhils, hill and forest tribes, and mixed tribes. . . . The large class of commoner plain Bhils and most of the wilder hill and forest tribes are broken into an endless number of small clans. . . . such as Pavâr, Mali Mori."⁴ The last word explains the use of the word Mori in the grant.⁵

"Among the plain Bhils disputes are generally settled by reference to a council (*panch*). Each of the wilder mountain tribes has an hereditary chief, *nâik*, some of whom were formerly men of great power, and were served by the Bhils with wonderful faithfulness. Each chief has an hereditary minister, *pradhân* or *chaudhri*, also a Bhil. As is the case with Mhârs and Mângs, Bhil organization is by districts and by single villages. The district pargana consists of a given area or group from ten to twenty villages, and, as its headman, the Nâik, receives through his minister all requests for arbitration committees, *panchs*. . . ."

"The present Khândesh cultivators are Kunbis, Mhârs. . . Bhils. . . Bhils are found here and there tilling on their own account. Some of the younger Bhils take yearly service, *sâldâni*, with Kunbis and other cultivators, but most of them are small land-holders or hire fields from Gujar and other capitalists on the share, *gavând*, principle. The land-holder gains most by the bargain. He provides the land and seed, and the Bhil, the labour, cattle and tools."

The present condition of the Bhil cultivator in the North-West of Khândesh is special. There, the landlords are mostly Gujar capitalists,

¹ *Ibid*, p. 205.

² *Khandesh Gazetteer*, pp. 423-24.

³ *English Factories in India, 1651-54*, by William Foster (1915), Introduction, pp. XXV-XXXIII.

⁴ *Khandesh Gazetteer*, p. 83.

⁵ "Moori is a sub-class of the Bhils, but it is also an important clan of the Mahrattas, and as the same is called a Mahratta in the sanad the term refers to it." "Mori" of the Mahrattas, not to that of the Bhills." Mr. G. Yazdani

⁶ *Khandesh Gazetteer*, p. 93.

not peasant proprietors, and the Bhils were formerly contented to serve for clothes and food, liquor now and then, and a small sum of money whenever their children were married.¹

Of the size of the holdings in Khāndesh, the *Khandesh Gazetteer*

The size of the holding referred to in the Grant. says: "In dry crop land, from two to four or five hundred acres is a large, from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty a middle sized, and from ten to twenty-five a small holding. In garden lands from twenty to forty acres is a large, from ten to twenty a middle sized, and less than ten a small holding. . . . Fifty acres of dry crop land will, unless in seasons of failure of rain, support a husbandman, his wife, two children and one field labourer, *sāidār* comfortably without the money-lender's help."² Now, as the holding of the grant under consideration is for dry crop land, and as it consists of 60 bighas, *i. e.*, about 30 acres, it can be classed as a small holding.

The figures which give the date of the Grant are not clear. First

The date of the Grant. of all, one finds that the last figure, *i. e.*, the last on the right-hand side may stand for '2' or '7'.

But the form of the figure '2' in the last line, in the figures for number 12, enables us to say, that it is not '2' but '7.' There is no doubt about the figure next to it. It is 1. Then there is long empty space between these two figures (17) and some other figure. From this gap one may hastily come to the conclusion that there is no other preceding figure, and that the Hijri year is simply 17. But the very fact that the plate cannot be so old as thirteen centuries before our time, leads us to lay aside that conclusion. And hence we are led to suspect that the form of some figure written with a flourish of the hand on the last letters of the word *nūn* must be a numeral. It looks like 'one.' The *nuktāh* of *nūn* in *sanāt* seems to have been joined to it. This would give us the year of the tablet as 117 Hijri. But that date also is not at all acceptable, because the language of the grant does not show it to be of so remote from our time. We take it then that the writer has omitted some figure between 1 and 17. Which one? It would seem that if any figure has been omitted by the engraver of the plate, the chances are that he omitted a zero, because that consists of a single dot like the *nuktāhs* or dots which he often omitted elsewhere. So, we take it, that the figure between 1 and 17 is zero. Thus the year may be 1017. The form of the figure over the last letters of the word

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Khandesh Gazetteer, pp. 136-37.

sanat may be read as 9. In that case we must not look for any omitted figure between 9 and 17; otherwise, the number would be nine thousand some unknown hundred and 17. All these considerations give us the following two dates more or less probable :—

917 Hijri.

1017 Hijri.

Which of these two is the correct date? It seems that it is 1017. The Muhammadan date of the month and the day of the week help us to the conclusion. The day of the week mentioned is *Panj shanbāh*, i.e., Friday, and the date is the 12th and the month is *Shā'ban*. Now we find as a matter of fact, that in 1017 the twelfth of *Shā'ban* was Friday. This settles our doubts and fixes the date.

The condition of Khāndesh in Hijri 1017, which seems to be the date on the copper plate, was rather unsettled. "The Mughals (in 1600) found the Bhils hardworking and loyal subjects and under the Mughals they seem to have continued quiet and orderly."

¹ I am indebted to my friend Mr. Meherjibhoj Nusserwanji Kuka for kindly calculating the corresponding dates, which he gives as follows :—

"Muhammadan date 12th Shā'ban.

A.H.		A.D.		
917	=	4th November, 1511	=	Tuesday.
1017	=	11th November, 1608	=	Friday."

This settles the question that as the 12th of *Shā'ban* was on Friday in 1017, the copper plate grant is of the Hijri year 1017 = A.D. 1608, the time of King Jahangir.